

XIX 13plomc42
Regem Habemus
THE IMPERATIVE DEMAND.

(Sermons of Eugène Bersier).*

Translated by the Editor. Charlotte K. Haran

I.

WE live in an age when many serious souls are liberating themselves from the bonds of recognised religion. So far as external, formal religion goes, their protest against this is at an end; they bow the knee and worship, and say it is fit that they should; but they decline to have their beliefs bound by the dogmas, their ideas inspired by the teachings, of the ancient creed. This attitude of many thoughtful minds need not fill us, to whom He is all-in-all, with despair for the cause of Christ. Above all, we need not keep a dark closet wherein lies, *perdu*, the possibility of doubt. If we do this, if we go about with a secret unnameable dread lest, if we open our eyes to all that is to be known, we, too, may pass over to the ranks of the Unbeliever, why, perhaps we may "save our own souls" if we care about it, but we have sold birthright and blessing, we have nothing to pass on to our children of the golden heritage of Christian hope. No man can give what he has not got; and this is true, above all, of the certainties of the faith. But we are in the dark hour before dawn; such a Christianity is coming upon us as neither the world nor the Church has ever dreamed of; even now we begin to see our way out of the darkness, because we begin to see why it has fallen upon us. To use the language of philosophy, religion, as we know it, is subjective, not objective; that is, our religious idea is directly opposed to the genius of Christianity. Oh, the appalling egoism of "Christian" literature! while, of that name,

"Which whoso preacheth
Speaks like music to the ear,"

of that enthralling Personality which is capable of ever-fresh unfoldings to meet the needs of all the ages, we hear, only, as it is subservient to our poor uses. "For *me*" is the keynote of one great school of religious thought; "By *me*" that of another; but how seldom is Christ Himself, for Himself—not for what

~~*The Editor has received the kind permission of Madam Bersier to translate the following Sermons by the late Eugène Bersier. The translations appeared some years ago in a book no longer obtainable, and are re-printed here by request.~~

Madame Bersier has recently expressed great pleasure in the fact that these sermons should be welcomed by English people.

He is for us, or has done for us, or worketh in us—placed in the foreground of religious thought!

Possibly it is for this that many consciences are in revolt against religion as it is taught. "What think ye of Christ?" is the question that is searching all hearts, and it is only as we are able to ring out our answer in the clear glad tones of passionate conviction, that we have any sure and certain hope to communicate to the children.

our

It is for this reason that parents are profoundly indebted to a prophet who is able to lift the veil and give us living thoughts of Christ; such thoughts, for example, as are scattered, "few, faint, and feeble" it may be, through the pages of *The Christian Year*; such simple images as of—in the words of another poet—

"Jesus sitting by Samarian well,
Or teaching some few fishers on the shore,"

are very precious to us. If any teacher is able to measure the surging shallow thought of our day, and show us how Christ still sitteth above the water floods, a king for ever, he does an unspeakable service to parents, many of whom are suffering under an anxious sense that they are the conservators of Christianity for their children, but that they hold their treasure with uncertain grasp. How to communicate the treasure is not the question. Give them the idea, and none in the world knows so well as parents how to convey it to the minds and hearts of the young.

+ teachers

We think we have found such a teacher as our times demand in the late Eugène Bersier, Pastor of the Reformed Church of France. His important works demand more than a brief notice; and we propose to introduce any of our readers, to whom his teaching is not familiar, to the incisive thought of one who has set himself to the solution of the anxious question of the age with profound insight and triumphant faith. Let us hear him, first, on *The Royalty of Jesus Christ*, bearing in mind how much his nervous and eloquent language loses by translation: (Translator)

There few
sermons
may serve

THE ROYALTY OF JESUS CHRIST.

Men of the highest intellectual calibre, who, nevertheless, hold themselves for Christians, and whose sincerity is beyond a doubt, believe that they will render Christianity more acceptable to our contemporaries if they can reduce it to the proportions of an historic fact produced by the religious conscience of humanity, and that the figure of Jesus Christ will attract the

greater respect and sympathy the more it is divested of the bedazzling nimbus of a supernatural origin and of supernatural powers.

Let go, they say to us, all those marvellous incidents to which modern criticism has done justice, and which are repugnant to our reason, trained by the severe methods of positive science. Present Jesus Christ no longer as He appears to you, transformed by the enthusiasm of His disciples, elevated by them to the right hand of the Father, and participating in the worship which belongs to God alone. What do you lose thereby? There remains to Christ the unique glory of having been the greatest of the prophets, the preacher of a spiritual religion, the initiator of the Divine paternity, of human brotherhood. Alone among the children of men, He felt beat in His heart the certainty that He is a Son of God; He gave God His true name, that of Father; He established between man and God the true relation which produces in our souls confiding faith and love. It is for this that He will always be in our eyes alike Master and model. In the incomparable precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, in His sublime parables, in the spectacle of His sufferings and of His death, He shows us what human life penetrated by the Divine love may become; and this example will be so much the more contagious when Christ, become truly our brother, shall appear to us no more in the diaphanous light of a legend belonging to the dawn of reason, and when we shall see in Him a son of Man, subject to the same temptations as we, and conquering, by moral struggles valiantly supported, His title and His dignity of Son of God.

Such is the language we hear about us, and which from sincere lips cannot leave us indifferent; for in an epoch troubled as ours, when so many minds turn with cold disdain from all eternal hope, it is something, it is much, to recognise in Jesus Christ the initiator of religious truth. Wherefore, to those who speak thus, we would not respond in the well-satisfied accents and with the sententious affirmations of an orthodoxy which believes itself infallible. But, on the other hand, we should be blind did we not see the immense importance of the concessions which they demand of us. Whether Christianity is a gift of God made to humanity, or is only the supreme effort of the human conscience, is a fundamental question. Instead of seeing in Jesus Christ, with the whole Church, divinity revealing itself in a man, they demand that we see in Him humanity made

divine, because it has arrived for the first time by Him at the full possession of the divine. To those who believe that at this price they can save the cause of Christianity, we say, with the ardour of profound conviction, in the first place, their illusion is enormous; and next, that their Christ, reduced to quite human proportions, is a Being far more incomprehensible than ours, of whom they will have none.

I have said *their illusion*; let me explain. They believe—do they not?—that the Gospel, despoiled of all supernatural elements, reduced to the simple proportions of a moral life, of which the Sermon on the Mount should be the eternal code, would impose itself henceforth on the conscience, and would no longer excite any revolt of the reason. Now I appeal to all who have studied the movement of contemporaneous thought—is it true that their hopes are realised in any degree whatever? Where are the proselytes gained to this new gospel? Where are they who find in it peace of mind and of heart? Would you know what I observe to-day? It is, that that which is attacked the most bitterly, the most disdainfully, at this hour, is precisely the whole conception of morality of which the Sermon on the Mount is, in our eyes, the sublime and popular expression. Ask of our Positivists—I do not say only of those who, in the silence of the study, follow with inexorable logic their system to its final consequences; I say of the popular leaders, of those whose words I heard recently applauded with frantic enthusiasm by our Parisian workmen, ask them what they think of a God of Providence who nourishes the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, who counts the hairs of our heads, and to whom we should pray with the simple trust of a child. Ask them what they think of the Beatitudes. Ask these apostles of the redemption of humanity by science how they conceive of the promises addressed to the poor in spirit. Ask these politicians how they regard the triumph which Christ announces to the meek. Ask of these social reformers what judgment they form as to the eternal compensation assured to the afflicted and the persecuted. And when you have collected their answers, given in a frenzy of wrath and scorn, you will tell us if it is sufficient to abandon this folly of the Cross and of supernatural Christianity in order to win to the Gospel the generations of the future.

I have a right, then, to say that the illusion of those I combat is profound. I add that the Christ whom they present to us is an imaginary Christ of whom history knows nothing. When

we would know what Jesus Christ was, there is one whom we should interrogate before all others—Jesus Christ Himself. Let us hear His testimony. Lest we accord too much to the enthusiasm of His disciples, let us consult, not Saint Paul, whose letters, however, of incontestable authenticity, are the most ancient historical documents of primitive Christianity; nor Saint John or his school, whose mystic thought has, we are told, idealised Jesus. Let us hold to the three first Gospels, which are the faithful echo of the ministry of Christ in Galilee and its bloody epilogue in Jerusalem. You know them by heart; for I appeal to that first impression within you which no critical analysis has been able to affect. Is it true that Christ, such as He there appears to us, is no more than an humble Israelite, attaining, by means of the moral struggles of life, and by the study of the ancient prophets, to feel vibrate for the first time in His heart the certainty of the Divine paternity and of human brotherhood, and founding thus, by the spontaneous effort of His genius, that magnificent reality which He calls the kingdom of God? I do not prejudge your response, but this is mine: in my eyes, the Christ of Matthew, of Mark, of Luke, as that of Paul and of John, is a Being who, from the first, acts and speaks as a king.

The domain in which Jesus Christ moves is a domain exclusively religious; in all that He teaches and in all that He does He occupies himself solely with the relations of man with God, and of man with man. He touches neither social nor political questions. Never is He engaged in that region of things terrestrial and transitory, nor yet with those scientific truths which God has delivered over to the free investigations of men. And let us say in passing, it is because the Gospel has contracted no alliance with the powers of this order, it is because it has espoused no policy, no social system, no cosmogony, no philosophy, that it proves itself to be addressed to man himself in that which man has of central and of essential, that it is able to adapt itself to all ages and all races, that it is universal, and that it is always actual.

When I affirm that Jesus Christ pretended to royalty, it is to royalty neither of the order temporal nor of the order intellectual. We must, to quote a sublime saying of Pascal's, elevate ourselves to a sphere beyond that of Alexander, as of Archimedes; we must place ourselves on grounds moral and religious. It is there that Jesus Christ appears to me a king.

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Let us consider Jesus Christ in the character of a teacher. Compare His attitude with that of the philosophers, of the greatest of all, of Socrates, for example. We remember the famous parallel between Socrates and Jesus Christ which Jean Jacques Rousseau traced. On one point this parallel is erroneous; the death of Jesus Christ was not more calm than that of the Sage of Athens. It is not of serenity that one can speak before the Cross of Calvary, echoing still the *Eli sabachthani* which escaped the expiring Redeemer. Let us have courage to confess it—the death of Jesus was a death full of anguish; but it is this very anguish which has become for all the faithful an eternal source of ineffable peace. But between the teaching of Socrates and that of Jesus Christ, how striking the contrast! Socrates is a man who has measured his own ignorance, and who, with the candour of an enlightened conscience and of sound sense elevated to the point of genius, essays to discover the law of his destiny. What course does he take? He observes, he analyses human actions and the motives which inspire them; he seeks for the true moral laws underlying the syllogisms of the sophists; he collects the materials upon which his disciple, Plato, should erect a philosophy, admirable indeed, but full of subtle hypotheses, ingenious conjectures, wild phantasies, and which is, in the end, no more than the most sublime effort of human curiosity seeking to fathom the infinite.

After Socrates, let us hear Jesus Christ. Where find you in Him the effort of the inquiring reason? By what signs do you recognise in His language the travail of the intelligence labouring after truth? Where are the hesitations, the conjectures, the anguish, the doubts, which accompany with all men the conception of profound convictions, and which appear even by reason of the intensity of these convictions? From His first word, Jesus affirms. Never does His word mount from the earth as the supreme elaboration of a holy soul in travail; always, it descends from on high with the authority of a revelation. It is this accent of authority which strikes the crowd on the mount of the Beatitudes, and which retains through the ages its character, distinctive and sovereign. That which He predicates of God, of His nature, of His holiness, of His mercy, of the true worship which is owing to Him; that which He declares of man, of the eternal value of each soul, of obedience interior and spiritual, of the law of justice and charity by which human beings should be bound; that which He declares of our immortal destiny, of

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the life to come, and of the final judgment, Jesus speaks as a master. On each of these subjects he speaks the true and definite word which awakens an echo in the depths of the human conscience in all times, among all races, in all quarters of the world.

We shall be told, no doubt, that this accent of authority is not foreign to the lips of a son of Israel, that from this race, formed upon the law and the prophets, one cannot demand the language of philosophy, nor the methods of the dialectics they have never acquired. Let us admit that the criticism is legitimate—compare Jesus, as a teacher, not with the greatest of the Greeks, but with another son of Israel whom we Christians hold to be inspired, and who has an unparalleled intensity of conviction in his own inspiration, with that disciple of the law and of the prophets named Saul of Tarsus. If ever man were convinced of his Divine mission, if ever man laid at the service of his faith a sincere and ardent soul, surely it is he whose zeal has in these days won for him the glory which, in his eyes, would have been a blasphemy, of having been the true founder of Christianity. It is as we compare him with his Master that we are able to measure all the distance which separates Him who possesses the truth to the point of saying, "I am the truth," from him who was possessed by the truth to the point of becoming the most ardent of the Apostles.

Yes, it is in Saint Paul that we can study that travail of mind, that anguish, that spiritual drama, which I look for in vain in Jesus Christ. Read those letters, whose style, so original, so personal, so vivid, guarantees for ever their authenticity. Under this style, striking, palpitating, sometimes incorrect, under these tortured phrases, under this language which bursts as a vase too slight to contain the new wine, effervescing and running over, I perceive a soul, inspired, indeed, but a soul of man after all, which finds itself compelled to recount, in such poor words as it has, the mighty things of God. Of a surety, I bow before the apostle. I recognise in his words the message of a faithful witness of the Gospel; but with the apostle himself, I bow before Him whom Paul calls his Lord and his Master; before Him who opposes to the ancient law His own sovereign authority, who speaks of heaven as a son would speak of the house of his father; who says, "No one knows the Father save the Son;" who affirms that the heavens and the earth shall pass, but that His words shall never pass; before Him who, in a word, in the order of the revelation of religion, speaks always and acts always as a king.

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This royalty—so unquestionable in Jesus Christ when He reveals the truths of religion—I find, in the second place, in the attitude which He takes, brought face to face with the human conscience, of which, above all, He proclaims Himself the Master and the Judge.

Let us consider for a moment, from this point of view, the thesis which I combat. They tell us that Jesus, simple son of Galilee, by His experiences and His struggles, conquered, little by little, the possession of the internal peace and the religious truth of which He was the initiator, the witness, and the martyr; they tell us, that the more we bring ourselves to regard Him in this light, divesting ourselves of every supernatural preconception, the better shall we be able to comprehend Him and to love Him. Here, again, let us interrogate Jesus Christ Himself, and see what is the true impression which He produces upon our souls.

We are all agreed upon one point—that the moral law preached by Him is the most spiritual and the most holy that the world has yet heard. It judges not only the words or the actions of men: it reaches the hidden, the hardly-conscious thoughts; it is an inexorable illumination, which penetrates into the last folds of the heart: it sees murder, not only in the act, but in the hatred—what say I?—in the egotism which leaves him to perish whom we are able to save; it discovers adultery in an impure look; it ordains a sanctity and a justice of which God is called to be the secret witness.

Whilst worldly liveries, frivolous, or sold to the servitude of a culpable passion, say that we exaggerate, that we calumniate human nature in speaking thus, *they* accuse themselves the first who accomplish in silence the hidden works of holiness and of charity. It has ever been thus. If you would collect avowals the most poignant, confession the most heartbroken of human misery, it is of the souls of the *élite* you must demand them; the very vision which reveals to them the immaculate summit of moral perfection shows them at the same time the profundity of the abyss which separates them from it; witness, among thousands, this Saint Paul of whom we have been speaking, surely one of the most valiant, the most holy, and the most loving souls the world has ever known, and who, in the impressive description he gives of the internal struggles between the law of the spirit and the law of the flesh, lets this cry of anguish escape him, "Miserable that I am, who shall deliver me from this corpse?"

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Now let us examine the phenomenon in face of which we are placed. We see before us a Being who without hesitation, without research, without a doubt, announces to men this law of perfection which, since His coming, can never more be relegated by the human conscience. This man, in preaching this so perfect law, has the absolute conviction that He has always accomplished it. He who wrings from humanity the avowal of its misery, who troubles even the consciences until then the most peaceable, He never confesses His sins, He never lets escape him a word of remorse, a cry of repentance, an avowal of regret. Not a ripple, even the slightest, ruffles the surface of His own conscience. He believes Himself holy, absolutely holy; and His disciples, witnesses of His most intimate life, have called Him the Holy and the Just. In the records they have left us of His ministry—records of which the simple style, artless and unstudied, testifies abundantly that the writers have followed no preconceived plan—we perceive that they describe a life in which the penetrating eye of the critic has been unable to discover, I do not say any crime, I say any fault, any defect, a single weakness, one vulgar trait. Every act, every thought, every sentiment of this Man was the constant realisation of the ideal law of love and holiness. Not only does this Being affirm His own perfection, but from the moment of His appearance He erects Himself the absolute master of consciences; He binds and He unbinds; He sends away sinners absolved by a sovereign sentence; He saves or He condemns; it is before His tribunal that all souls shall one day appear, and it shall suffice that He say unto them "I never knew you" for that word to decide their eternal future.

What becomes, before this figure, of the theory of the young Galilean, arriving by slow interior travail at the possession of peace, pardon, of the sentiment of adoption and of Divine filiation? If He is only a man, let them tell me how He has conquered moral peace; let them show me the traces of those internal struggles, the inevitable anguish of the birth-throes of perfect sanctity! Let them explain to me this rôle of Judge and Master pronouncing on all men a supreme sentence, of which eternity shall see the accomplishment! Since eighteen hundred years the Christian conscience has resolved this question, and its verdict is final. It has felt that here are sanctity and an authority which do not belong to the earth; it has saluted in the Christ its Prophet and its King.

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THE IMPERATIVE DEMAND.

(Sermons of Eugène Bersier).

Translated by the Editor.

II. under H. Eugène Bersier's conviction

[We have already considered our Lord Jesus Christ's claims to be our King, as supported by (a) the manner in which He teaches the understanding, and (b) the manner in which He judges the conscience. ~~The~~ Parents of little children can hardly do a better thing for their children than to make these arguments of M. Eugène Bersier their own, become imbued with the like passionate conviction, and read the Gospel history (with a note-book) in order to establish every point, with many examples. All of us who have to do with children should be able to give a reason for the hope that is in us, and such a reason as will satisfy the keen and critical young mind. Where only little children are concerned, it may be enough to fill ourselves with convictions which will inevitably flow from the full heart in the most simple talks, which the little ones can understand, about Christ the King. But ~~where parents~~ have young people growing up about them, would it not be well to make these sermons the bases of a careful study of the Gospels? A young person fortified with this kind of teaching, having such arguments by heart (in the best sense), will not be carried away by every wind of doctrine. The shame of having nothing to say for the faith they profess is the real cause of the falling away of many an ardent young soul. We absolutely must face the questions that are in the air. However much we elders choose to shut our eyes and say we see no danger it is certain that no young person of education and intelligence will long escape the necessity of having to contend for or deny the faith. Surely education should make some provision for this exigency.

Teacher

for those who

Let us now consider M. Bersier's teaching as to (c) the manner in which Christ presents Himself as the Master of hearts, and (d) in the exercise of the supernatural power which He claims to possess.—~~Ed.]~~ Translator

"This royalty of Jesus Christ, which manifests itself in the manner in which it reveals the truth, in which it judges the conscience, appears to me" (M. Bersier), "in the third place, and

says

with still greater force, when I consider the place which He vindicates for Himself in the love and in the life of those who come to him. We must give to this fact its full importance. It is, no doubt, natural that He who said to men "Love you one another" ought Himself to be beloved. We learn in the school of Jesus Christ two things—the love of man, and that which is called in religious language detachment from the creature. How reconcile the two duties? The contradiction between them is only apparent. Christianity would establish its hierarchy in the affections, in the world of the heart, as elsewhere it establishes the reign of law. It renders to God His place and relegates man to His. Yes, it is love which should bind all creatures, but in binding them to God. God—behold the only Being who can possess our love in its plenitude. To created beings we give a part; and if one of these absorb the whole there ensue disorder and idolatry; so the more holy the creature, the more elevated in the moral scale of things, the more it fears to attract to itself the homage which belongs to God alone; it humbles itself, it effaces itself, it cries "Not to me, not to me, Lord but to Thy name give the glory." Thus is realised that hierarchy of beings of which Pythagoras of old had a glimpse when he said, that harmony is the law of the world. Of this fugitive vision of genius Jesus Christ has made the religion of humanity.

In this hierarchy of beings, what is the place which Jesus Christ vindicates for Himself? What pretends He to be among men? I interrogate the Gospels, and they respond: Jesus Christ pretends to nothing less than to be the supreme end of all love, and the profound source of all life. From His first public words, He declares that it is for the love of Him that His disciples shall suffer persecution. Little by little, He reveals to them all the grandeur of His office and of His person. By that slow method of education which is His own, and which consists, not in imposing the truth by means of formulas, but in giving it birth in the hearts and the minds of His followers, He prepares them to comprehend that which He is. It is only after a year and a half of teaching that He poses them with this decisive question, "Whom say ye that I am?" He directs upon His own person the regards, the attention, the faith of His disciples; it is to Him they must come, it is in Him they must believe, He it is whom they must love. All affection must be subordinated to this dominant affection; all bonds of flesh and blood must be broken if they oppose themselves to it; and as if to make this truth live

in men's hearts, Jesus did not recoil before that most formidable of paradoxes: "Whosoever hate not his father and his mother, whosoever shall hate not his own life, cannot be My disciple."

And even as Jesus lays a claim to all love, He reveals Himself as the source of all life. From His person flows henceforth an inexhaustible stream of life and of holiness. Think what there is in these simple words, "Come unto me," addressed to all the afflicted of the earth, and in that promise, as magnificent as superhuman, "You shall find the rest of your souls." It is in the same spirit that He founds the holy Sacrament, inviting through it all believers of the future to contemplate His flesh broken and His blood shed for the sins of the world, and making of His sacrifice the eternal object of their faith. It is in the same spirit that, when about to leave His disciples, in that supreme moment when, having achieved His work, He should, had He been no more than the greatest of the prophets, have effaced Himself, and directed their regards to God alone, He addresses to them those words which will, throughout the ages, sustain all the believers of the future, "Behold I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

It is not only by His words that Jesus affirms His spiritual royalty; it is yet more in His acts; it is in the order of facts. He acts as much as He teaches, and in the action, as in the teaching, He displays a sovereign power to which we must give the only name which belongs to it; it is supernatural. Here we touch on an actual and burning question. The more it is to-day the subject of controversy, the more I feel bound to approach it freely and without reticence.

That Jesus Christ pretended to supernatural power is the teaching of all the evangelical texts, without any exceptions, and I have no need to stop in order to prove this. It is not only the letters of St. Paul which affirm it; it is those most ancient and most authentic documents in which the most prejudiced critic is compelled to recognise the faithful echo of His ministry. Let us admit, as many think to-day, that the narrative of St. Mark constitutes what may be called the primitive evangel; we all know that from the beginning to the end it recounts to us the miraculous activity of Jesus Christ. We shall be told, no doubt, that all these marvellous incidents are the spontaneous creation of the popular Jewish imagination, which is unable to represent to itself a religious hero without crowning him with the aureole of the thaumaturgist. But one fact gives to this assertion a

peremptory denial, and proves that the evangelists knew how to resist this tendency. There existed in the first century of our era a prophet who enjoyed an enormous popularity, a man of such eminence that the historian Josephus, who seems hardly to have known Jesus Christ, gives him, on the contrary, a prominent place. This man is John the Baptist, whom Jews and Christians venerate equally. Now we see that the evangelists attribute no miraculous acts to him. They retrace for us, in a manner precise and striking, his ministry, his preaching, his death, without the introduction of a single supernatural circumstance, which fact proves that they were able to conceive of a mission divinely authenticated, without accompanying prodigies.* When they come to Jesus it is quite otherwise; and on each of these pages we find ourselves in presence of acts which suppose a power absolutely superhuman. That is to say, that their language changes, that their narrations become from that point less precise, more vague, more legendary, and that one feels less in them the mark of witnesses who have seen, who have heard, that which they recount? On the contrary, these same evangelists give us of Jesus, of His character, of His attitude, of His teaching, a picture so living, so original, so powerful, that it has traversed the centuries; they have preserved to us His words, of such grandeur that their authenticity imposes itself on every intelligence which is not blinded by miserable prejudices. Each one feels that these maxims, so profound and so penetrating, that these answers which reach to the bottom of things, that these parables of a style so pure and so marvellously original, that these discourses, have been really pronounced and faithfully reproduced. Now, many of these words are interlaced so closely with the acts of Jesus, with His healings, with what we call His miracles, that it is impossible to imagine a texture more close and more compact.

I cannot restrain myself from making here an historical parallel. The earliest biographers of Mahomet filled his life with the marvellous: now, it is a tree which, before him, advances or retires; now water, which, at his touch, throws up citrons; now apparitions of legions of harnessed angels come to take his part in his battles. Now you may suppress all these marvels, and the personality of Mahomet is not the least in the world altered, the Souras of the Koran lose nothing of their sombre and monotonous originality; and this observation which I apply to Mahomet

* "John did no miracle."—John x. 41.

touches equally many others of the heroes of religion. Very little critical sagacity suffices to separate in their lives the primitive source from the later accretions. This separation between the supernatural and the real, cannot, I maintain, be carried out in the history of Christ without disfiguring His personality, and making of Him a being incomprehensible and monstrous. Of two things, we must, in fact, choose one: either the acts which He accomplished are real, or they are purely imaginary. If they are real, and if we deny their supernatural character, one is reduced to see in them only the *tours de force* of a thaumaturgist able to impose on a credulous crowd; miserable explanation which the critic can apply only by having recourse himself to very *tours de force* of subtlety, and which is in such contrast with the moral sublimity of Christ that it can never satisfy the instructed conscience, nor even the simple good sense of the uneducated. If these acts are imaginary, the difficulty still remains insoluble, for then it is necessary to admit this: that His biographers—who have transmitted to us with a scrupulous fidelity so many of His words, so many lengthy discourses even, which they could not have invented, because the teaching there collected is absolutely beyond their range—that they are deceived all at once: become the victims of their own imbecility, or of the most fantastic hallucinations, when, in the same pages, they recount the acts of Jesus. And this, though these acts were infinitely more easy to verify than the words, because they fell under the senses of those who were the witnesses of them.

The problem, you see, is inextricable and desperate. So we have a right to conclude on this point, that those who refuse to admit the miracles of Jesus Christ do so not only because the historic testimony appears to them defective, but, in the first place, for reasons preconceived; it is because they have erected into a dogma the impossibility of the supernatural. Let us examine for a moment this pretended axiom and see what we think of it.

The notion of the supernatural suffers at this moment such discredit, that many minds believe it to be exploited. "One can foresee the day," writes recently M. Renan, "when belief in facts supernatural will be in the world a thing as little considerable as is to-day the faith in sorceries and ghosts." The cause of this discredit is complex. It holds, above all, to the method to which Auguste Comte has given the name of positive, and which consists in excluding from science all explanation,

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metaphysical and religious, in order to hold only to facts rigorously observed. Thanks to its apparent simplicity, this method is to-day triumphant, but it remains to be seen how far it suffices to explain our destiny, moral and religious; now, it is that which we deny energetically.

There is a system, as old as Epicurus, which consists in maintaining that Nature is sufficient to explain herself, and that all in Nature is reducible to matter and its properties. This system, very logical and very familiar, is materialism. It is evident that those who accept it have nothing to do with the supernatural, nor with God, nor with first cause, nor with moral liberty, nor with a future life, nor with religion. All is, for them, gathered into a single substance, matter; into a single principle, force, which, in its successive evolutions, has produced the world such as it appears to us.

I do not discuss this system; I state simply the immense popularity which it enjoys to-day. But it is not to materialists that I address myself; it is to men who admit that thought is not the result of a displacement of molecules, that spirit is of another order than matter, that moral liberty is a reality, that the world was not conceived without a supreme Cause, intelligent and perfect. It seems that men, in virtue of even these premises, should be logically conducted to accept the notion of the supernatural. It is, however, amongst these that I meet some of its most resolute adversaries. It is not that they deny the theoretical possibility. The idea which even they have formed of the liberty and of the omnipotence of God will not permit them to render the Creator the slave of the laws which He has made, but this simple possibility, empty and bare, cannot struggle against the repugnance which their reason, formed by our positive methods, experiences against admitting the reality of miraculous facts. Will they permit me to say to them that this repugnance is not worthy of the philosophic mind, and that they alone are truly independent who are able to resist the current of their age!

Consider the favourite argument which they allege. They appeal to the general impression which the religious history of humanity makes upon us; they tell us that all religions, whatever they be, have their origins shrouded in the marvellous, that this pretension is null, even because it is universal, that it simply proves one thing—the aberration of the human imagination over-excited by the religious ideal; they demand of us, why

even we who oppose ourselves instinctively to the reception of the legends of all the mythologies, why we pretend to make an exception in favour of the evangelical legends, why we claim for Christ that which we refuse to all the *soi-disant* thaumaturgists of ancient and of modern times. The objection is specious. Let us see if it is as peremptory as they pretend.

It is incontestable that always and everywhere man has believed that, if the divinity intervened in his destinies, such intervention should manifest itself by acts which, behind all second causes, allow the first and sovereign Cause to be perceived. This presumption has, it is equally certain, given birth to an innumerable multitude of absurdities and legendary marvels. Does it necessarily follow that it is false? That is the true question. For me, I confess that this presumption has great weight, not only because it is universal, and because there is always a strong philosophic tendency to recognise an aspiration of the human conscience which is produced always and everywhere; but still more because it is justifiable in reason; because if there is a God, if this God wills to make Himself known and to establish His reign, it seems impossible that He should not reveal Himself as the Master of Nature, as the sovereign and all-powerful Being. To take away the supernatural from religion because of the aberrations which it has produced, is unworthy of a thoughtful mind. As well might you remove prayer, adoration, the hope of a future life—religion, in a word—for the sole reason that these manifestations of the human soul have been often extraordinary, fantastic, even monstrous. Now, here as elsewhere, we must distinguish the true from the false, and the ideal from its gross perversions; even so, in face of the supernatural facts of the Gospel, so clearly attested by the first witnesses, our duty is, not to proceed by arbitrary negations, but to ascertain if these facts do not reveal an intervention of God in the history of humanity.

To this consideration, already so strong, let us add another. The study of Nature reveals to us in the whole creation what may be called an ascending series. At the foot is chaotic matter, ruled by laws purely mechanical; then, above, life, at first vegetative, afterwards endowed with movement, with instinct and a confused conscience which is elevated little by little towards intelligence, morality. They tell us now that this ascending progression is the simple result of an evolution through millions of years or of ages. I leave this hypothesis on

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one side, as I have no call to discuss it, and I simply state that at each of these stages we may observe a new manifestation of life, which is *supernatural* in regard to the preceding, because it is affirmed by phenomena which the preceding would not have been able to produce. It is evident, for example, that when life appears where, until then, simple mechanism had reigned, life brings with it phenomena of the biological order; life in the animal would have manifestations superior to those one sees in vegetation.

Suppose now that man should appear where the animal only had preceded him, he would exercise there immediately a power of a new order; he would modify the effects of the laws of Nature; he would make brute force serve a pre-determined and intelligent end. He would suspend the laws of gravitation; he would graft on a tree a branch which that tree would never produce; he would create in the animal series, by the crossing of species, a type unknown until then. The human reign, then, is manifested by phenomena which would be supernatural for him who was acquainted only with mechanical forces, only with the manifestations of animal or vegetable life. Suppose now we elevate ourselves to a sphere higher still; that, above the human reign, we admit that reality which the Gospel calls the reign of God amongst men. I say that the advent of this reign would draw with it, by an irresistible analogy, phenomena attesting the sovereignty of spirit over matter and of holiness over evil.

To this reason let us add a third, still more powerful and, in our eyes, decisive. Only the most superficial optimist can pretend that nature, such as we contemplate it in man, is in its true and normal condition; disorder is everywhere, in the domain of the intelligence under the form of error sometimes monstrous, in the domain of the conscience under the form of falsehood, in the domain of the heart under the form of egotism or of lawless affections, in the physical domain under the form of sensuality, of deformity, or of sorrow. To the wilful sophists who say that all is well, humanity responds by the cry of its sufferings. To those who affirm that evil must needs be, it responds by the clamorous protestations of its conscience and by the sorrowful confession of its misery; for the human soul has, like the ocean, its ebb and its flow, and to the rising tide of its crimes corresponds the sinking tide of its remorse. If evil were with us only the simple heritage of a primitive animal nature, we should commit it naturally; but man is not a brute; so when he becomes

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brutal, he descends lower than the brute itself. He is false to his nature; he perverts it; his tendency is sub-natural, so to speak, contra-natural. If, then, the redemption of humanity is to be accomplished, it must be by the re-establishment of the true nature created in the image of God. The sub-natural calls invincibly for the supernatural.

Now, that which we call the supernatural in the work of Jesus Christ, what is it if it is not, before all, the restoration of human nature to its normal state, such as it is according to the will of God? It is this character, so profoundly moral, which ever distinguishes the miracles of the Christ from the multitude of legendary feats, born of the love of the marvellous. This desire for the marvellous has been by no one so severely condemned as by Christ Himself; no one has said more clearly that the prodigy alone is utterly useless, and it is because He thinks thus that He always refuses to make parade of His divine power. Nothing, absolutely nothing, in Him awakens the idea of a thaumaturgist; His acts are simple and sublime as His words, and in the one as in the other it is, before all, the Redeemer who manifests Himself. But the redemption He would accomplish has for its object the entire human nature, corporeal and spiritual at the same time. I insist upon the word corporeal; for Christianity, in opposition to all the religions of the East, and to the ancient philosophies, has never placed in the body the principle of evil; and Christianity alone proposes to sanctify and to save the entire man.

How should this restoration of the integral nature have been accomplished by the Christ if He had been limited to teach, if He had not acted, if He had not touched with His divine hands the born-blind, the demoniacs, and the lepers? What! you find it good that, in His discourses, Jesus Christ protests against the insolent triumph of violence, against the perversions of justice and of right, against moral evil in its triple manifestation—sensuality, selfishness, and pride; you are moved when, in the face of the ruins of the Divine handiwork, so profoundly altered, He traces before you the grand outlines of the kingdom of God; in this language you recognise the revealer of religious truth: now, by what right, or in virtue of what preconceived idea, do you interdict Him from realising in *facts* that which He proclaims in His words? Is it necessary then that He remain powerless before physical suffering, and that He limit Himself to contemplate with a sterile sympathy the hideous malady which decays the

leper, the extinguished sight of the blind, or the overthrown reason which betrays the terror and the anguish of the miserable possessed? Is it necessary that He stand, disarmed, face to face with death? Is it necessary that He, in His turn, submit to it, vanquished by it, as all the children of men, throwing to the world, by way of last adieu, a theoretic protest to which responds the implacable irony of Nature immutable, subject to the eternal fatality of evil?

It is not thus that Christianity understands the work of the redemption. It shows us in Jesus Christ a Being who is truly the Son of man, subject to all the conditions of humanity; a Being who grows, struggles, and sanctifies Himself; but, at the same time, a Being who, by His acts as by His words, reveals to us the intervention of God in humanity; a Being who, always and everywhere, affirms the sovereignty of spirit over matter, of holiness over evil, of life over death.

One can explain Cæsar, Mahomet, Buddha, Confucius; one cannot explain Jesus Christ. Do you desire the proof of it? It is that the attempts at such explanation recommence without ceasing; it is that you are satisfied by none of them; it is that every epoch in turn exercises itself upon this problem without ever resolving it. "What hast Thou to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" cried, one day, a possessed of Capernaum. It is the cry of the human conscience, and each generation repeats it, transported in turn by admiration and by revolt from adoration to blasphemy, before this Figure whose perfection attracts it and repulses it, and understanding by an infallible instinct stronger than all sophisms that Jesus Christ can be nothing if He be not the Master and the King.

(To be continued).

III

THE IMPERATIVE DEMAND.*

Sermons of Eugène Bersier.

REGEM HABEMUS.

[Having considered how our Lord Jesus Christ supports His claim to universal kingship in these four aspects—the manner in which He teaches the intellect, in which He judges the conscience, in which He claims to be the master of hearts, and in the exercise of the supernatural power which He claimed to possess—M. Bersier proceeds to consider how these pretensions have been supported by history :—

Is it not evident, he says, that the more magnificent the dream, the more miserable must be the awakening? *Translator*

Let us then interrogate history, and ask of it what testimony it has to render to the royalty of Jesus. We have seen that the claim of Jesus Christ is to a royalty, moral and religious. It would be absurd, then— is it not so?—to inquire if this royalty is exercised in the order political, or in the order purely intellectual, and to repeat the old sarcasms of the Romans upon a King who let Himself be crucified, or the ancient pleasantries upon that religion of the ignorant which gathers its votaries amongst cobblers, fishers, and journeymen.

This royalty, being of the moral order, can exercise itself only as it respects human liberty. It will impose itself, then, neither by brutal force nor by phenomena which would produce upon the senses an irresistible and fatal impression, nor by a scientific demonstration which would strike only a small minority of minds, and would subjugate them by mathematical evidence which would have in it nothing of moral force. If the Church, forgetting this great principle, would fain realise this kingdom of Christ by the arm of the flesh, she would be doing despite to the expressed will of her Chief.

Therefore, we must expect to see this royalty accepted *and* combated in turn, blessed or cursed. And this is, in fact, what Jesus Christ most plainly announced. Often did He speak to His disciples of the future which awaited them. I defy any one to find in these words of His any optimistic hope, any promise

*Translated by the Editor.

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of success, immediate or universal. The impression left on the mind is, rather, sombre; not more sombre, alas! than that produced by the history of the Church during these eighteen hundred years. There shall be struggles, says the Master, there shall be persecutions and defections, there shall be, always, bitter hatred against the truth. Events still follow this monotonous course; there are wars and rumours of war now as in all time. But, the grain of mustard shall become a great tree, and the people shall seek refuge in its shade; but, the Gospel shall be preached to every nation under heaven.

Two things, then, are clearly announced: opposition and progress, persecution and victory, or, more exactly, success even by means of defeat; as on the day of Calvary, so until the end. I know that this divine plan astonishes us: we cannot conceive how God, all-powerful and all-good, consents to these long adjournments, to these momentary recoils of His cause, to these apparent defeats. Were we in His place we should ordain, without doubt, the immediate triumph of justice and the splendid manifestation of truth. God has not willed it. It has pleased Him that religious truth should submit to all the laws which regulate human things; and that, even as on the day of its incarnation in the holy humanity of Christ it was contradicted by the Pharisees and scribes, denied by its own disciples, railed upon by Herod and Pilate, delivered to the buffetings and spittings of the Pretorium;—even so, in its incarnation during eighteen centuries in the bosom of our corrupt humanity it has pleased Him that the truth should be held in vessels of clay, transmitted from men to men, imperfectly translated in their imperfect languages, travestied, calumniated, often persecuted, liable to suffer from the infirmities of its disciples, compromised by their errors, served by their devotion, by their knowledge, or their energy, propagated by their discoveries, by the art of printing, by the triumphs of steam, by the diffusion of light and of liberty; then, all at once, arrested, perhaps for long, by some common accident, by causes fatal in appearance, which deprive it of its most valiant apostles, and leave it without defence. Such appears to me to be the aspect in history of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, divine in its origin, human in its destiny, subject to all the vicissitudes of things here below, and marching across its momentary defeat towards its assured triumph.

We do not ask, then, if the cause of Christ is a cause always popular and victorious. In advance, the Gospel before us, we

tell you that that is impossible. But we ask, in the first place, if His spiritual kingdom is real, and for an answer to this question we shall appeal first to those who accept it, afterwards to those who reject, whether because they hate it, or because they misunderstand it.

Let us first hear those who accept it. "He is the King!" Here is the canticle which is chanted by the Christian Church everywhere under the heavens, and the singers are all those who have bent under the gentle and pacific yoke of Jesus Christ. At this day, at this hour, we may hear it on the lips of millions of adorers of all ages and of every nation. These say it in the naïf glow of their young enthusiasm, those myriads of children that each generation leads to the feet of Him who has said, "Let them come unto Me;" others, with the strong affirmation of a conviction, powerful and rational; those, with the repentant cry of the sinner who mourns over his sins of the past; others, in the tears of an unspeakable sorrow which have cleared their vision to perceive the apparition of the Sovereign Consoler. This kingdom,—the sons of Shem were the first to salute it; then Greece perceived its moral beauty; Rome submitted to its ascendancy; and when races, haughty and savage, poured forth from the forests of Germany and the steppes of the antique Orient, they, in turn, bowed themselves before the Crucified—as those Goths of the yellow locks, ancestors of the Anglo-Saxon races, whom Chrysostom saw adoring the Christ in a basilicon of Constantinople, and of whom he said, with prophetic instinct, that they should one day carry the flambeau of the Gospel which the Greeks had let fall from unworthy hands.

Thus from age to age Christianity extends its limits. To-day there is not a believer who, looking at Africa on the map of the world, land long accursed, and whose sands have drunk in human blood by torrents—even as those old empires of China and the Indies—does not say, "One day these people shall be subdued to Christ Jesus."

Now in the midst of so many races, so dissimilar in aspect, in language, in temperament, in genius, Jesus Christ has known how to create an empire, founded alone on that which there is in man of most intimate and most profound—as many of those who hear me would attest, were it necessary, who attribute to His name the greatest emotions of their interior life, and the decisions which have many times saved them. What empire can be compared to His? As the flow which, at each tide,

brings the ocean to all the shores of the world, even so does adoration carry to the feet of Christ the homage of those hearts whose master He is; and even of those others, who are so carried away by the current of passing events that they do not allow to escape from their lips the avowal that none among the children of men is beloved as He.

It will be said, no doubt, that in this concert there are discordant voices, and that the kingdom has been from the first combated with furious resistance. I do not forget it, and, instantly, I recall the fact that Christ has foretold as much. Always, let us remember, truth can be recognised by two signs: by the love which it inspires, and by the hatred which it excites. There are maledictions which do it a more magnificent homage than adoration itself. When all the voluptuousness, all the infamies, all the cruelties of ancient Rome united themselves against the new-born Church in her virginal robes, pouring out upon her the fierceness of their wrath, these voices attest, after their manner, even as the Christians in their canticles, that Christ is a king of love, of justice, and of holiness! Do you not understand? Would you have Nero salute Christ otherwise than by his hatred? and that, as so many other Cæsars of his kind, he should mingle in his atrocities and his massacres the invocation of the holy God? Is it not enough, is it not too much, that the Church should have had as protector a Constantine, a Charles IX., a Philip II.?

You will answer, I know, and I say it myself, that the question does not stand thus in our days, and that it would be iniquitous to rank all those who turn themselves to-day from Jesus Christ amongst those who follow the inspiration of their pride and of their corrupt heart. You point me to men of eminent intellect who have openly broken with Christianity, and who seek sincerely in the inspirations of their conscience for the rule of their conduct and the direction of their life. I recognise these facts, convinced beforehand that I am not permitted to call evil that which is good, and that I am required to salute integrity of life wherever I may meet with it, whether—which I have often seen—it ally itself to superstitious ideas which I condemn, or, on the other hand, to the negations which desolate me.

Yes, it is only too true that under the flag of Jesus Christ march men whose life is for the Church a subject of humiliation and of scandal, and that amongst those who attack it we meet

adversaries to whom we cannot refuse our respect. It is eighteen centuries since the Master predicted that the tares should mingle with the wheat in the field until the harvest, and that it does not pertain to His disciples to separate them. This fact saddens me, but it presents no difficulties to my faith, and I will tell you very sincerely why.

~~(To be continued).~~

THE IMPERATIVE DEMAND.

Sermons of Eugene Bersier.

REGEM HABEMUS.

SUBMISSION to Jesus Christ implies two things: faith in His person, and obedience to His will; these two elements united form the Christian life; the more strict their union, the more intense is this life. But history shows us that this union is rare. There are epochs, long epochs, when the conservation of the faith, the unity of the faith, its orthodoxy, has been the dominant and often exclusive idea of the Church, where Christian life was all but dried up, and become more and more exterior, intellectual, dead. Recall Byzantium, where discussions, as subtle as they were furious, on the divine essence, mingled themselves with the refined pleasures of a corrupt court. Recall the epoch of the Merovingians, when assassinations and poisonings multiplied, whilst upon the basilicon were to be read these triumphant words: *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat*. Recall Italy in the fifteenth century, the court of Valois in the sixteenth, and the old age of Louis XIV. The exterior edifice stands, imposing, majestic, but moral rottenness secretly consumes the foundations until the hour when it falls with a sound of tempest.

Inevitably these excesses call forth others, otherwise humanity would be humanity no longer. When the hour of emancipation sounds, men scorn, curse, that teaching, those dogmas, in whose name so many iniquities have been committed. And in order to refute them the better, what do they? They oppose to them principles of justice, of equity, of love, of mercy, forgetting only one thing—that these principles are the very foundation of the Gospel as set forth by Jesus Christ. Yes, it is Jesus Christ whom they oppose to Jesus Christ. On the one hand are those who do this with the skill of enemies knowing well how to choose their arms; as Voltaire, of whom it has been said with truth that, in shaking the dry tree of Christianity, he shook down fruits which the believers forgot to gather. Others know nothing of Christ; they have never been able to perceive Him through the dark thicket of their ignorance or of invincible hindrances; but even in fighting against Him they submit, without knowing Him, to the ascendancy of His spirit and His

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precepts, and while Christians in name give to Jesus Christ their faith without giving Him their life, these unbelievers in name serve Him in their life even while they refuse to Him their faith. "Is Christ divided?" said Saint Paul. Alas! history shows us too much of this cruel division: on the one side, those who believe without doing; on the other, those who do, without believing. And when we think of these last, must we not recall that sublime scene of the parable of the Last Judgment? "Then shall the righteous answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee hungry? when saw we Thee a stranger, sick, and in prison, and went unto Thee? And the King shall answer them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done these things to one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done them unto Me" (Matt. xxv. 37-40). Who shall say, who can say, what is the number in the world to-day of these unconscious servants of the unknown Christ?

Thus, then, above all in this much troubled age, do I discern the influence of Jesus Christ. Oh! I know that on all hands the Church is battered by tempest shocks which should cause her to founder. From above descend the high glaciers of incredulous science; from below ascend the cries of wrath, hatred, blasphemy, of the multitudes exasperated by secular sufferings; and I recollect, as I hear the tumult of voices, the sweet word of the Master, "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him," and this prayer, supreme expression of the infinite clemency, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

But when, alarmed by these clamours on every hand, believers come to us and say that the reign of Christ is coming to an end, I am tempted to answer them, "O men of little faith, weep no more for the Christ, for He remains, but weep for yourselves and for that blind race which denies Him who is able to save."

No! His reign is not finished, and in this twilight, which, according to you, heralds the darkness, we salute the aurora of a day of which the renewed Church shall see the splendour. Would you have proof of it? Interrogate these men whose menaces alarm you; ask them what is their programme of the future for the amelioration of human society, and you will see that the most generous and the most practical of their ideas are merely plagiarised from this Gospel of which they will no more, from this Gospel of which the practical realisation, far from

being achieved, has, we must say it, to the humiliation of Christians, only commenced.

What do they demand? Liberty? Listen to the Gospel: "The kings of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them, but it is not so among you." Justice? Listen to the Gospel: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Equality? Listen to the Gospel: "You are all brothers." The independence of the religious conscience? Listen to the Gospel: "Call no one on earth your father, for you have only one Father, even God." The liberation of civil society from all spiritual domination? Listen to the Gospel: "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." The destruction of all slavery, the protection of the young and the feeble, the freer participation of all in every right, the destruction of misery and of ignorance the practical realisation of the great law of solidarity? Can the Gospel be hostile to these when it was the first to proclaim them? What demand they more? The end of national rivalries and of wars, the reign of peace? Where has this reign been depicted with such magnificence as in that book which, under Tiberius and under Nero, affirmed that the heritage and the possession of the earth should be to those who seek and who will peace? Say not then that you have got beyond the Gospel while it presents itself before you as the resplendent pharos of the future. Say we to ourselves, we Christians, that we make a miserable travesty of it. We bow the head because we know this to be true; but the shame, at least, should not fall upon Him whom we name our King.

I know that there is yet more in this Gospel. There are those religious truths of which you believe that man may henceforth pass them by; there is the affirmation of the existence of a God, creator, legislator, and judge; there is the proclamation of our moral responsibility, of our culpability, and of the necessity for us to repent and to believe; there is the Divine promise of a pardon which is an act of grace; there is the assurance of the love, profound, infinite, of Him whom we call our Father; there is the certitude of His incessant action in the history of this world, and in the most humble of our destinies; there is, lastly, the life eternal, with all which the word contains of consolation for hearts like ours, whose terrestrial felicity is at the mercy of a moment's experience, which may have, to-morrow, perhaps, to

place their dearest treasure under planks of oak. These religious truths, which we call doctrines, Christianity has strictly united to the moral truths which men pretend to-day to separate from them. In her profound knowledge of humanity she has seen that these proceed from those. The desire to suppress religion for the better conservation of the moral life is, as it were, to level the gigantic Alps by way of shortening the descent of the deep waters which take their rise therein, as if it were not from the deep glaciers accumulated at their summits that the Rhone and the Rhine are fed.

Ah, well! It remains to be seen if they are able to level the doctrines of religion, which are the Alps of the human soul; if it is possible for them to extinguish the great light which the Gospel has projected on our destinies, and if the generation which follows us will indeed inscribe on the portals of the twentieth century these words, in which Saint Paul summed up the condition of the pagan world of his times: "Without God, without hope." None can say how far will descend the intoxication of atheism which, to-day, troubles so many spirits; but for its honour I affirm that Humanity will not be able to remain in these depths profound; and when she would mount towards the light, she must needs seize, not the trembling hand of a simple child of men, but the all-powerful hand of Him who has resolved the mysteries of sin, of sorrow, and of death, and who, since *nineteen* ~~eighteen~~ centuries ago, has said to men: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; none cometh to God but by Me."

For us, Christians, who have found in the Christ the King of our souls, let us muster more resolutely than ever under His banner; and since God calls us to serve Him in the religious liberty so valiantly vindicated by our fathers; since, in the order of religious revelation, as in the order of grace, as in the order of the Church, we have only one master, Christ—we swear to remain faithful to Him until the hour of death, which, thanks to Him, proclaims for us the entry into the life eternal.

Three centuries ago the greatest hero of the French Reformation, Gaspard de Coligny, defended the little town of Saint-Quentin against the formidable invasion of the Spaniards. The imprudence of Valois had delivered to foreigners the frontiers of France. . . . Saint-Quentin had only ramparts in ruins; fever and famine decimated its defenders; the terrified population spoke of surrender, treason lurked in corners. One day the enemy shot over the walls of the town an arrow bearing a strip of

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parchment with an inscription which promised the inhabitants, if they would surrender, to accord them their lives and their goods. For all response, a Spanish officer tells us, Coligny took a strip of parchment and wrote thereon these simple words, *Regem habemus*; then he fixed it to a spear, which he threw into the camp of the enemy. *Regem habemus*. We have a king. This was for him the heroic expression of his faith in his country, which his loyal soul incarnated in his king, even though that king were Henry II., the husband of Catherine de Médicis, the father of that Charles IX. who became the assassin of the great Huguenot captain.

And we, Christians, enclosed within this ancient citadel of the Church, attacked on all sides to-day, without, our ramparts too often falling into decay, within, too many cowardly counsels and sinister rumours which announce approaching defeat, we, in our turn, say *Regem habemus*. We have a King! a King of righteousness and of truth, who shall yet vanquish the world, and to whom belong the empire and the glory for ever. *Amen!*